

Intrepid

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Summary: Renee' Bekk, a Spartan who had been previously affiliated with Project Freelancer, now works alone due to her inability to "cooperate" with other team members since past events and losses had led her to suffer from mental instability and extreme aggression towards others. The UNSC attempt to use her aggression as a weapon against enemies, and she comes close to losing her humanity.

1. Chapter 1: On My Mark,

All I could hear was my own heart beating. I looked to the left at my brother, Charlie, who stood stiff, his back and hands as flat against the wall as humanly possible. I can't see the expression on his face through the silver tinted visor on his helmet, but by the way his hands shook as he clutched onto his rifle for dear life I knew he was scared. No, not scaredâ€¦ Mortified. I look once more into the opening of the hallway which is the only space dividing my brother and quickly turned back around to face forward once more, leaning my back against the wall with my DMR held close to my chest.. All clear. I let out a deep breath. It seems like it has been forever since I breathed last. I look over at Charlie. By the way he stands I can tell he can't take this much longer. This is the heaviest firefight our squadron has ever been in, not to mention that my brother and I are the only survivors from our squad. My only mission now was to ensure the safety of my brother. Even though I'm a year younger than him, I am stronger, faster, and more built for fighting than he is. I have to protect him. He is all I have left. We have to get out of here aliveâ€¦ I hear footstepsâ€¦ A single pair of metal boots against concrete echoing down the hallway. They're slow, heavy steps. It's an elite. I feel a scream of anger build up in my chest, but I choke it out to avoid any unwanted attention from the Covenant. I look to the left at Charlie, who is already staring at me through his visor. I'm not sure if it's his heart I hear beating or my own, but it sounds loud enough to give away our position. I can see his knees shaking, his hands trembling. He's panicking.

"Charlie," I whisper in a choked voice

"What do we do?" He says back to me frantically. Even though his voice is quavering, hearing it comforts me, allowing me to think of a plan before it's too late.

"We need to do this as quietly as possible. The Covenant haven't figured out we're in here yet. As soon as he reaches the end of this hallway, I'll go for an assassination and you make a run for it. I'll catch up with you, don't worry."

"But Ren-" "It'll be fine, this will workâ€¦ It has to work.." I pause, "I promise I will get you out of here, Charlie."

"But Ren, what if we don't get out," He whispers in a tone too harsh for my liking. "What if we die instead?"

"I will not allow that to happenâ€¦ It won't" I snap back, now fully determined to get both of us out of here alive. "We go on my mark"

"Ren, pleas-"

"On my mark, Charlie" I growl. If either of us screws this up, the possibility of us getting out alive will be dim. So I wait. The footsteps getting closer. Louder. I want to hold my breath but it is impossible. The footsteps grow closer down the hall. Echoing. My stomach churns and I feel sick. Every instinct in my body is screaming at me to jump out and put a million rounds into the elites head, but I know that is not the best idea, considering that this place could be swarming with millions of Covenant for all I know. I bite my lip and glance to the side at Charlie. I can't tell if he is as scared as I am, or moreâ€¦. The footsteps are close. I close my eyes. "On my mark," I say quietly. Three. Two. One. "Mark"

In a blur I see Charlie turn and begin to sprint down the hallway, the elite suddenly blurting out a loud, rough, and guttural roar as Charlie runs past him. It aims its plasma rifle and I hear several shots fire before I can think to move. I quickly jump onto the elite's back and hoist myself up by pushing my feet into its upper back and clutch my hands around its neck. The elite blurts out yet another rasping cry and openly fires into the air, whirling and spinning around frantically to get me off its back. I struggle to keep my grip on him in order to reach my knife that is equipped onto my thigh. The elite twirls around and slams me up against the wall, pressing all its weight into me. A groan rumbles in my throat and my grip on the elite loosens slightly. This is taking too longâ€¦ I have to get to Charlie. My fingers find a slit in the back of the elite's armor and I grip onto with my left hand, releasing my right hand from its neck to reach my knife. The elite roars. To my relief, my hand finds the knife with ease and grip onto it, its soft handle conforming to every curve and groove in my palm. I bring my arm up and with all my strength I force it down into the opening in the elite's armor around its neck. I can feel the blade cutting through its tough skin, through its muscle. A stream of florescent orange blood trails out from behind the knife as I rip it out from the elite's flesh.

>I jump off the elite's back as it falls with a loud thud, its gun hitting the floor and echoing through the halls. A moan slips from the elite's mouth but I pay no mind to it as I begin to sprint down the hallway to find Charlie.<p>

The hallways seem endless. Every turn I make seems like I'm running farther away from Charlie. I make another left turn. The dirty concrete echoing beneath the weight of my armor. I turn right. A jackal lay lifeless in a pool of its own purple blood, its mouth ajar, staring at me with its glossy eyes. I must be going the right way.

I continue on the path, guessing at turns as I go down the hallways. I can hear rain tapping against the metal panels outside the Covenant base. I have to slow my pace to hear the distant low rumbles of thunder roll through the halls. I must be getting close to the exit. I sprint towards the sound, hearing it get louder every step I take. I see the exit. It's guarded by an energy shield, and the only way to bring it down is if I know the combination to disable it, but that would take forever. I forcefully jam the butt of my rifle into the control panel and the shields retract and the door clicks open. I open the door and run outside, feeling the raindrops hit my armor like small pebbles.

I can hear distant gunfire crack and pop through the air and I run towards it. The rain picks up, as well as the wind. The bare, rocky land that stretches in front of me gets muddier by the second. My boots thump and splash into the mud and some of it begins to stick and build up on the bottoms. I run through a puddle and wash most of the clumps off. Purple and blue lights flicker on the dark gray clouds and fade away within an instant, only to be met with the sounds of the Covenant weapons firing and echoing in the distance. I run faster.

* * *

><p>I see a COM tower in the distance. If I can get there and hook my helmet up to it, I may be able to get a connection with the UNSC and request a pelican out of here for immediate evacuation. A familiar voice brings my attention off the COM tower. I hear it again, this time it's louder.<p>

"Ren!"

"Charlie? Is that you?" I call back through the rain.

"Over here!" He yells, his voice quavering.

I follow his voice and it trails back behind a large rock wedged deep within the ground. I check behind me to make sure I'm not being followed and then crouch next to him. I look him over. His back is stiff against the rock, and his breaths don't seem to be coming naturally. "Are you alright?" I ask, cautiously keeping watch over all visible directions around us. I notice the rain has lightened considerably to a gentle mist, but thunder still grumbles in the distance.

"You tell me," He groans and removes a hand from his right side, revealing a deep, blistered plasma burn.

I inspect the burn closely. It's pretty serious burn from what I can see. I feel a pain in my chest from seeing him in so much pain and I have to look away. "Charlie, it's going to be okay. I'll get you out of here," I look over my shoulder to see if we're being watched, then

return my eyes back to him. I sigh under my breath. I feel a ting of guilt spark in my mind, and for some reason, a lot of anger that overrides that guilt. If he would have paid more attention while running, we wouldn't be in this mess and he wouldn't be hurt. It's HIS fault, not mine. Now it's up to me to keep him alive. I shake my head. I can't be thinking like this, it's my job to take care of him, and that is my current mission. "Look," I say as I point east of our direction towards a tall glowing tower erecting from the ground high above the rocks. "That's the Covenant COM tower. If we can get over there, I'll tap into the system and hopefully be able to make a connection with the UNSC. I'll get us a pelican out of here and-"

"Ren, I won't be able to walk, I can hardly move,"

"Charlie, I'm going to get us out of here. You're going to live." I say firmly, though the confidence inside me is wavering. I look back at the COM tower. It's not far, only about 1 ½ kilometers east. I could easily sprint it, but Charlie on the other hand... I sigh.

I try to think of a plan. Something. Anything. We can't sit here. I look at Charlie, who is inspecting his wound. I get up and hold my hand out to help him up. He looks at my hand, then up at me. Even with his helmet on I can see that he isn't fond of my new found plan. "Get up." I say.

"Ren, are you serious? I can't I've got this burn and," He pauses shuffling through words in his head "Do you really expect me to-"

"I don't expect you to complain. Now get up, we have to go, now."

He utters a short painful laugh, "You gotta be kidding me, Ren, I don't think you understand, I can't-"

His words are cut off by a loud shattering noise. I turn my head to see several pink glowing needles coming towards us. They shatter against the rock like glass and let off a pink glowing mist that dissipates into thin air. I grab his hand and ignore his scream of pain. We run towards the forest line, towards the tower. The pink needles follow close behind. I pull Charlie along with me even though he sometimes jerks my arm back when he tries to stop or slow his pace. I hear him wheezing and coughing behind me, sometimes yelling in pain when I pull him forward too hard, but I don't stop running. I can't stop running. We have to get out of here.

* * *

><p>We reach the forest line and I throw the both of us into the shadows. Charlie falls to his knees and rolls on the ground in pain, clutching his side. I know he wants to scream at me but he's too out of breath to utter a single word. He groans and gasps for air, coughing and choking. I stand and look at him, leaning against a tree to catch my breath. He chokes once more and gets to his knees, ripping off his helmet and throwing it into the wet dirt beside him. His wavy brown hair looks black against the shadows, and it sticks to his face, wet with sweat. Tears fill his eyes and stream down his wet face. He holds himself up on all fours and breaths heavily, still coughing uncontrollably. He lets out a loud groan that sounds more like a muffled scream and grabs his side with one hand and gags, his body convulsing forward. He inhales a short breath and chokes on it,

causing him to gag once more. He drops the hand covering his wound back to the ground and vomits.<p>

"Charlie, calm down" I say in the best comforting voice I can muster, having to look away from him.

After a few minutes he drops to the ground and rolls on his back away from the vomit and breathes heavily, his arms and legs widely sprawled out on the dirt, weak from exertion. My breaths are steadier now, but my heart is pounding and my legs burn. I look around us. I can see the far distant glows of blue and pink from the Covenant weapons as they search in the night to find us. It's hard to believe we escaped them, especially with Charlie's screams of pain as we ran. I look back over at him. He still lies on his back, arms and legs sprawled out. His chest puffs up and down as he breathes. His hair is covered in mud, and his face is scratched and bruised, but it's not bad. I walk over and pick up his helmet from the mud and sit down next to him with it in my lap. We sit in silence for a long time.

"How- do I look?" He finally asks, his voice weak and shaky, but he still manages to smirk a little and push out a forced laugh

"Well," I hesitate "Almost as bad as when you had that burrito accident in the mess hall,"

He chokes out a laugh and turns his head to me. "So.. basically.. it looks like I shit- ..all over myself?"

I allow myself to chuckle lightly in order to lighten the mood.

"Yeah." I nod. "You're just as sweaty too," I say with a smirk

"..Lovely." He retorts.

I wipe the mud off the visor of his helmet. I notice it's cracked in several places, but don't bother to ask him about it. There will be more time for stories later when we get back. I let the both of us sit in peace for a while, listening to the rustling of the leaves and the silence that follows. I still hold his helmet in my lap and continue to fumble with it in my hands as I think of what to do next. I look down at the helmet. It reads ODST in small white print on the inner rim of the helmet. My brother wasn't outfitted to be a Spartan like I am. He also didn't want to take the risks that come along with becoming one. But it just felt right for me to undergo all the training and tests and surgical operations. It was worth it. I sigh and look over at him again. He seems more at peace now. His hands are behind his head as he looks up at the clouded sky. I almost don't want to leave. Having to keep moving means putting him in more pain, and it doesn't seem worth it. Not after all he's been through. I decide to brush my thoughts aside and stand up. He looks at me with his dark brown eyes, awaiting ordersâ€¦ like a good soldier. I offer my hand to help him up.

"â€¦Again with the walking and the running?"

"Unfortunately," I reply.

He pushes my hand away and turns on his side and slowly stands up on his own, leaning on a nearby tree to steady himself. I hand him his helmet, which he accepts and slides it on. He looks at me, and I nod. Not sure what for really. I want to say something to him; something to encourage him, or motivate him. But nothing comes to mind. So I begin walking, listening to his unsteady footsteps following close behind.

2. Chapter 2: Communications Tower

Finally making it to the COM tower, I helped Charlie over to a tree to sit him down. He groaned as he slowly slid down the trunk of the tree, using both me and the trunk for support. He breathed heavily and tried his best to muffle his coughs in his throat so he wouldn't draw in any unwanted attention. Without words I left him to rest, figuring he could handle himself for a few minutes as I scout out the area before barging in there guns ablaze.

I walked to the edge of the woods, not too far from Charlie, and crouched down behind a thick of brush as I surveyed the stretch of land that lay ahead of me. The purple glow of the Covenant COM tower illuminated the ground, allowing me clearly see a large circumference of the area. From what I can tell, the tower looks to be deserted at the moment. I study the shadows cast by the tall rocks erecting from the ground, waiting for some sort of movement, but I see nothing. I see no one. Instead of relief I feel an uneasiness settle over me. It's not like the Covenant to leave their precious equipment unattended like this.

Something seems wrong.

A faint grunt of pain from behind me snaps my attention away from my assumptions and back to reality. I'll allow myself, just once, to have a little hope that maybe it's not an ambush waiting to happen. Maybe it's a chance to be rescued.

I return to Charlie, who hasn't moved an inch from where I left him. I take off my helmet and set it next to me as I kneel down next to him to inspect his wound. I can see my reflection in his visor as he looks at me. I have a thin cut above my eyebrow, and my jaw is a little bruised, but I don't look nearly as beaten and worn as he does.

"Any Covies?" He asks me wearily.

"Not that I can see..." I reply. "How are you feeling?"

"Tired. Light-headed... My side is numb."

I frown. That was not the reply I was expecting, considering how sarcastic and witty his tone usually is, even in times of pain. He's losing himself. If I don't get him out of here, he will die. I rest an arm on my knee and look down, thinking. I have to get us out.

Standing up slowly I put my helmet back on and look down at Charlie. "The Covenant COM tower is right over there," I say, pointing to the left towards the tower. "I'll find a way in there, hopefully be able to set up a connection with the UNSC through my helmet, and request a

ship out of here... You stay put."

"Make it quick, Ren." He replies weakly, sounding out of breath.

I nod as I stand up, not wanting to make any promises. "Think you'll be alright out here by yourself?"

He nods and leans his head back against the tree with a thump. I take one last look at him and turn, beginning to walk towards the tower.

* * *

><p>As I walk further the trees and brush thin until I am completely out in the open. Exposed. I try my best to remain in the shadows as I approach it, being mindful of every step I take and every noise I hear. The tower is planted on top of a tall metal structure, resembling several platforms of round rooms, one consisting of a Communications control panel for sure, the others contain who knows what.<p>

I make it to the entrance without a problem and disable the shield door the same way I did while escaping from the previous Covenant settlement earlier today. I step inside. The rooms are not very big and mainly consist of several colorful holograms of Covenant vessels, and a whole lot of buttons. I walk up to the third floor where I find the Communications Panel. It looks familiar and I know how to operate it somewhat from what I've learned in training. I take off my helmet and remove a small chip from the underside of it. I was ordered to disconnect my COM channels from my helmet to prevent the Covenant from tapping into them and figuring out my squadrons plans. But now those orders have proved to be more harmful than helpful. I insert the chip into a slot on the panel and put my helmet back on in order to hear the signal I'm picking up.

I search through the channels, pressing a series of buttons, not %100 sure if I know what I'm doing. "Mayday mayday, this is Renee' Bekk, Spartan 0173 of the UNSC Spartan Military Force requesting immediate evac. Please respond,"

Only static comes through.

"I repeat, mayday mayday, this is Spartan 0173 requesting immediate evac, please respond," I continue to search for a signal, broadcasting the message, hoping that someone, somewhere can hear me.

"Mayday, mayday, we are stranded on a Covenant settlement and requesting evac. Respond,"

Still nothing.

"Please, can anyone hear me? Spartan 0173 requesting immediate evac, please respond!" My heart sinks as I continue to listen to the static, unable to find a connection. I slump down to the cold floor and put my head in my hands, feeling tears forming in my eyes. I failed. I continue to listen to the static as it slowly becomes a white noise. I don't know what else to do. I have no idea how to find help. Our pelican isn't supposed to come for another two days and Charlie won't make it much longer if we can't get help soon. He will

die, and it will be my fault... because I couldn't save him.

>"Mayday, mayday, Spartan 0173... Requesting evac, please, someone, respond," I say wearily into the COMS once more, my voice hoarse from the tension in my throat.<p>

I suddenly begin to hear a disembodied voice speak through the helmet, its so faint and thick with static that I nearly miss it, "Th- i- Sergeant Tho- Lasky, w -ear you, -0173. Tracking y- posit-. Sendi- pel-can - immedi- -vac."

A cry of relief slips from my mouth. They heard me...a pelican is coming. We're going to be rescued... Charlie is going to live, and we can leave this place.

3. Chapter 3: Memories Can Haunt

The pelican's engines roared as it hovered above us. I supported Charlie with my right arm around his side while he had his left arm around my neck gripping onto my shoulder. The both of us stood in silence and watched as the pelican slowly descend towards the earth. Puddles of water around us rippled as the strong winds blown from the pelican blew against them, and the grass swayed frantically as it landed. The sound of the engine died down until it was only a quiet rumble. We boarded the aircraft and Charlie groaned heavily as he sat down. I walked over to the door of the cockpit and banged on it three times with the side of my fist to inform the pilot we were ready for takeoff. I walked over to my seat across from Charlie and sat down without saying a word. The engines began to roar as the pelican slowly ascended into the sky. We made it.

We sat in silence, nothing but the gentle hum of the engine between us. I could tell we understood each other's exhaustion and figured it would be best not to speak at the moment. I sat slouched with my arms across my legs and my hands folded. Charlie removed his helmet and set it beside him. He looks worse than I thought. Now that I can visibly see him in the light, I notice all the bruises and wounds on his face more than I did before. His dark brown hair is blotched with dried dirt clumps and still sticks to his neck and forehead, heavy with sweat. His entire jaw is bruised and starting to swell, his lip is deeply cut as well as the area around his left eyebrow, and his skin looks deathly pale. He's still handsome, as he's always had the attractive genes in the family, but he's in bad shape nonetheless.

The engine's soft hum has become a soothing white-noise and I begin to feel myself dosing off periodically. I glance over at Charlie and see that he's still awake. "I'm surprised you haven't passed out yet," I say to him playfully. He looks over at me, his eyes tired as well as his smile as he chuckles lightly.

"Yeah, well, it's kinda hard to sleep comfortably with a plasma burn on your sideâ€|"

"Hmph, you have a pointâ€|.. Does it still hurt as bad?"

"Well, not as bad now that I haven't been moving around, but it still hurts quite a bitâ€| It sort of feels like when someone pours really hot coffee or boiling water on you, then repeatedly pokes the burn

with a ton of needles at once."

"I can't really say I know what that feels like,"

"Heh, it hurts. That's all you really need to know,"

"I'm sure it doesâ€¦ Hey, what do you suppose will happen when we get back?"

"Not sure. All that's on my mind at the moment is how soon will this thing healâ€¦ Hah, I wouldn't be surprised if-

Something loud explodes against the right side of the pelican's hull and jerks it to the side, pulling me along with it. If it weren't for my seatbelt I would have slammed against Charlie, who sits right across from me.

"What the hell was that?" Charlie shouts over the loud thundering noise that now rumbles from outside. Another explosion hits the pelican and my back slams against the wall from the heavy impact.

"How the fuck should I know!" I scream back at him. A red light above the door of the cockpit now flashes red while the siren goes off along with it.

A loud female voice comes through the intercoms of the pelican. "Multiple Covenant Phantoms approaching! Hold on tight!"

I feel my stomach drop and I grip onto the handle above my seat as the pelican makes a sharp swerve to the right. I hear gunfire and the pelican rumbles, only to be met by a powerful blow.

"There's too many of them, they've flanked us!" The pilot shouts.

I look over at Charlie; his arms and back are tense as his nails dig into the bottom of the seat as he grips onto it. His eyes are focused directly on me.

"Ren, we're not going to make it," He shouts to me over all the noise. His voice cracked when he said my nameâ€¦ Our bodies jerk to the side along with the pelican as it receives another powerful blow from the Phantom's plasma guns.

"Just hold on, Charlie!" I shout back to him as confidently as possible, but my confidence is dropping with each hit we get. I want to tell him not to worry, I want to tell him everything is going to be okay, but I know it won't. Our plane is going down, and we are going to die.

I grip harder onto the handle. The pelican rattles and I smell the engine burning through my helmet. I clench my eyes as tight as possible as I feel another explosion hit us. Suddenly it feels like something is pulling me, forcing me out of my seat. I open my eyes to see a large hole blasted through the back of the pelican. I grip onto the handle above me with one hand, and my seat with the other. I can hear Charlie shout my name above all the noise, but I can't hear anything else he's saying. I look over at him. His chin is pressed against his chest, hair is whipping through the wind, and his eyes are clenched shut as tight as they can be.

I feel a strong blow against my back and the back of my head smacks against the wall. My vision goes black for an instant and the next thing I know I'm outside surrounded by foliage looking at wreckage of the plane. I blink and I'm standing over Charlie's lifeless body clutching my arm and I'm covered in blood, but I'm not sure whose it is. His eyes are cold and lifeless, as well as the rest of him. Blood runs from his mouth and I look around me only to see dark crimson blood running down the walls of the pelican. My head spins. Everything around me is spinning. In the corner of my eye I can see the pilot's body, bones broken and contorted in every direction. Black hair sticks to her face and is matted with blood. I feel as though I can see every detail of her, yet I refuse to look over. Suddenly I notice that I can't feel the arm I thought I was clutching. I look down to see my right hand dripping with blood, but my other arm is gone. The pain intensifies and I scream, but no sound comes out of my mouth. I can't move. I try to scream again but my voice is muffled in silence. Every part of me wants to run, but I can't. I can't see. I can't scream. Everything goes black.

Then I wake up.

* * *

><p>My heart is still pounding as I sit up from my bed, my entire back drenched in sweat. Strands of my long hair have managed to tangle themselves around my neck, using my sweat as an adhesive to my skin. I pull my hair off my neck and swing my legs over the bed and onto the cold metal floor, resting my head in my hands. My breaths come out short and shaky and I try to calm myself by focusing on breathing slowly, but find it difficult. My hand slides under my pillow and feel the cold metal chains of my brother's dog tags. It's been two years since the pelican crashed with us on board, but I still remember it so vividly. Part of me wishes I could forget it ever happened.<p>

I look over at the clock on the far side of my room. It reads 4:37 A.M. I'm tired, but my mind is too occupied for sleep. I try to rub some of the sleepiness from my eyes and I stand up from my bed, feeling the cold floor against my toes as I walk over to my small closet to get dressed. I decide to keep my black UNSC t-shirt on and just put pants on over my underwear. I lace up my black combat boots and type in the code to unlock my door, listening to the familiar beep with every button I push. The door clicks and slowly slides open to the left and I walk out of my room, closing the door behind me.

The training room is empty as I enter. Multiple bright lights hang from the tall vaulted ceiling illuminating every inch of the room. Different pieces of training equipment are stationed around the outer parts of the room and a fighting arena is placed in the middle of it all. This was previously the training room used for the Spartans in Project Freelancer when I was recruited during the first year. However, I was removed from Project Freelancer before it was forcibly shut down by the UNSC and the Director was arrested for unethical conduct. Now the training room is open to anyone, but most equipment is still fitted to the standard physical capabilities of Spartans rather than average soldiers.

I walk over to an area with multiple targets resembling the outline

of humans aligning the wall. Knives have already been placed out on a table ready for use. I grab the knives and back away 15 feet from the target. I flip the knife around in my hand and feel the smooth cold metal blade touch my fingers. I draw in a breath and pull my arm back, focusing on the center of the target. My arm glides forward and the knife slides from my fingers in one swift, quick motion. I hear the blade slam into the heart of the target, almost able to feel the vibrations of the sound as it echoes in the silence. I throw another, using the same quick motion. This time the blade finds its way to the neck of the target. Not what I was aiming for, but lethal nonetheless. I throw another. It hits the chest dead center. I flip the last knife in my hand, gently feeling along the side of the blade with my fingertips. I draw my hand back and take in a deep breath, my eyes focused on the target's head. Just as I'm about to throw the knife, I feel the strong thump of someone's hands on my shoulders. I involuntarily spin around, the knife in my hand ready to cut someone if need be. When I turn, I recognize the face of the man. He stands only a few inches taller than me and is more heavily built. His dark skin tone contrasts against the white UNSC t-shirt he's wearing. His dark hair is buzzed close to his head like usual, and his face is clean and freshly shaved. It's Lucas.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, there, No need to get aggressive!" He says stepping back with his hands up mockingly.

"Well you should know not to do something like that when I have a knife in my hand." I reply angrily. He fakes a frown and droops his shoulders.

"I was just playing around,"

"I'm not in the mood for games." I say turning away from him to retrieve my knives. I grab each knife one by one and place them back on the table next to me, keeping three in my hand. "Why did you come to find me?" I ask, not really caring about his answer.

"Who says I came to see you?" He replies stubbornly.

"It just seems a bit odd that you're in here to train, considering the fact that you hate training and you're always messing around in the barracks." I retort before throwing another knife into the target. "So tell me, why did you come to find me?"

I feel him walk up behind me, his chest nearly pressed against my back. He firmly pats his hands on my shoulders and tries to sway me back and forth playfully. "I just wanted to see if you wanted to hang out later or something. You've been spending a lot of time in here. I never see you anymore."

"And you want to hang out with me, why?" Another knife slams into the target. "From what I've heard I'm no fun to be around." I say coldly.

"Well that's bullshit. You're a blast to be around!"

I huff and throw my last knife into the target. "Says who?"

"Says me." He replies pointing proudly to himself. "You don't need to be so hard on yourself, ease up a little" He says gently

I frown at him. "Now is not the time for me to "ease up a little". I'm being deployed in less than a week for my testing."

Lucas looks at me with a very puzzled expression. "Testing? What kind of testing?"

"Proficiency, speed, endurance. Everything along those lines. " I reply walking over to the target to retrieve my knives.

"How come I wasn't notified?"

"Only eight Spartans were picked. I'm not sure how they categorized us all, or what they're planning on doing with us, but the everyone seem pretty exited about it all. They say there's some sort of training afterwards if we qualify. I heard no one made it to the training sector last year though. I'm not sure what happened to them all."

His eyes suddenly widened and he grabs onto my wrist and pulls me closer to him. I can't feel how tight his grip is because he grabbed the arm that had been replaced by a robotic prosthetic from when I lost it in the pelican crash, but I can feel the pressure at which he pulled me and warmth of his hand. He leans close to me. "I don't want you to go with them. Something bad could happen to you." He says quietly, his eyes staring deep into mine.

"I'll be fine, its-"

"No, you wont. I remember now, the UNSC has been conducting these tests for years. No one ever comes back from this thing. Their files either read MIA or KIA. And I don't want yours to do the same."

"You're over-exaggerating, Lucas."

"I'm not. I just don't want you killed."

"Trust me, I wont get killed. I know what I'm doing." I say, pulling away from him. He doesn't try to keep his grip on me and instead lets his finger tips glide across my arm as I pull away, but I can't feel them. I don't want to.

"Please, Ren, listen to me," He says gently. "I care about you,"

I look away. "Don't call me Ren." I say firmly.

"Why not? That's the only way I can get you to listen to me."

"Well yes but it's not going to get me to reason with you. I told you to call me Bekk. Like everyone else. You're no different."

What I said seemed to hit him hard. I suppose he thought he meant more to me than that. He looks at me gently, like he's trying to figure something out and takes a step closer. I can feel his hand brush against mine. "Ren, please," He says gently, I can tell he's trying to calm me, but I want it to stop. I notice his fingers trying to entangle themselves with mine.

I quickly turn around and slam the knives onto the table. "Stop it!" I scream, my face feeling hot and my throat tense. "***Never** call me

that again." My tone is now quiet but I say it strong enough to get the picture across. "Now leave, Lucas." I say firmly through my teeth.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to-"

"Leave, Lucas! Go!" I scream, my hands clenching into fists. He stands behind me in silence for a moment, then slowly walks towards the exit. I don't want to turn around to see him go. I want to feel sorry, but I don't want to feel anything at all. Lucas was the only one who stood by me and tried to be my friend. And I just keep finding myself pushing him away.

"Guess I'll see you around... Oh, and good luck..." He says quietly just before he walks out the door.

I lean against the table with my palms pressing into the corners. Charlie was the only one who I allowed to call me by my first name, and now that he's gone, hearing it only reminds me of when he was alive. It reminds me that he is gone from my life. It reminds me of everything I've been trying so hard to forget... And now I'm alone.

End
file.